

# Refuting Accusations Against the Talmud and Non-Jews

## INTRODUCTION:

Judging the Talmud based on a single, isolated quote is much like the guest who wanders into a kitchen while a master chef is at work. Seeing a bowl of batter, the guest dips in a finger for a taste and immediately recoils, exclaiming that the cake is bitter and inedible. The chef calmly smiles and explains, "You didn't taste the cake; you only tasted the baking soda." On its own, baking soda is harsh and unpalatable, yet it is the very ingredient that allows the cake to rise and achieve its perfect texture. Similarly, the Talmud is a vast, complex masterpiece of law, philosophy, and history.

If you pull one "ingredient", a single challenging passage or a complex legal debate, out of its context, you lose the flavor of the whole. To truly appreciate the wisdom of the Jewish tradition, one must understand how every individual quote blends into the larger tapestry of the "cake," creating a spiritual and intellectual legacy that has sustained a people for millennia.



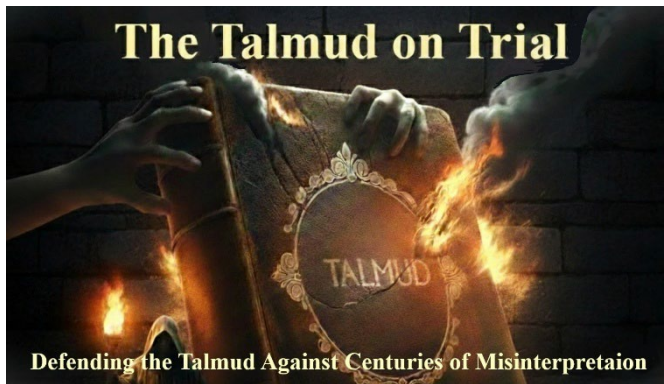
Beyond the specific ingredients of its texts, the ultimate proof of Judaism's value lies in the "finished product", the vibrant, ethical society it has produced and the profound contributions it has gifted to the world. Just as a cake is judged by its sweetness and its ability to bring people together at a table, Judaism should be measured by its functional reality: a civilization built on the foundations of *tzedakah* (charity), *chesed* (loving-kindness), and the revolutionary idea that every human being is created *B'tselem Elohim* (in the image of God).

From the introduction of the weekly day of rest (which most societies have adapted), to its emphasis on universal education and social justice, the Jewish legal system functions to create a compassionate community that looks after its most vulnerable. When we step back from the individual debates of the Talmud and look at the lived experience of Jewish life, we see a tradition that doesn't just theorize about goodness but actively builds it into the fabric of daily society.



While it is important to maintain a focus on the depth of Jewish thought, it is equally necessary to address the double standard often applied by critics. Many of the religious traditions that most harshly attack the Talmud based on isolated, misinterpreted quotes are the same ones that historically presided over centuries of systemic violence, forced conversions, and inquisitions. While Jewish tradition was engaged in the "kitchen" of the Talmud, debating the nuances of how to protect the poor, ensure fair wages, and value human life, many of its critics were using their own scriptures to justify Crusades, the slaughter of innocents, and the suppression of scientific thought.

When critics point to a difficult passage in Jewish law, they often ignore the fact that Judaism never used those texts as a blueprint for world conquest or the mass persecution of others. On the contrary, the "record" of a religion is best seen in how it treats those outside its fold and how much blood has been shed in its name. By any objective historical measure, the Jewish legal tradition has functioned as a remarkably peaceful and inward-looking system of ethical development, especially when contrasted with the expansionist and often violent histories of the very groups that seek to put the Talmud on trial.



## REFUTATIONS:

*“The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him” (King Solomon - Proverbs 18:17).*

It is important to clarify a significant piece of misinformation: The Talmud is a foundational collection of Jewish law, ethics, and philosophy written by Jewish sages for the Jewish community.

While it is sometimes targeted by **anti-Semitic individuals** who claim the text contains derogatory statements against non-Jews and Christians, these accusations are historically blatantly false.

## CONTEXTUALIZING THE CRITICISM

Claims that the Talmud promotes hostility toward outsiders typically stem from:

- **Intentional Mistranslations:** Phrases are often altered to change their legal or social meaning.
- **Decontextualized Verses:** Passages written during periods of intense Roman persecution are often stripped of their historical setting to justify modern prejudices.
- **Polemical Misuse:** External critics have historically used "cherry-picked" excerpts to fuel anti-Jewish sentiment, rather than to engage with the text's actual theological or legal framework.
- **Fabrications:** This involves the creation of entirely fake quotes that do not exist in any Jewish text. These are often assigned a random tractate and page number (to give the appearance of authenticity to those who cannot read the original Aramaic or Hebrew).

Most of these quotes originated in the 15th century, when anti-Semitic polemicists, like apostates **Peter Schwarz** and **Johann Pfefferkorn**, compiled 'lists' of decontextualized snippets to incite violence.

Other citations were created by a man named **August Rohling** in the 19th century. He was a priest who was later proven in court to be unable to read a single page of the Talmud. His goal was to provide "ammunition" for anti-Semitic political movements by taking technical legal debates and presenting them as hateful commands.

It's important to keep in mind that the Talmud is written in a "shorthand" of Aramaic and Hebrew that assumes the reader already knows the entire legal system. When people search for "scandalous" quotes, they often find snippets from the **Tosafot** (medieval commentaries) or obscure legal debates that look terrible when translated literally but mean something entirely different in practice.

Many of these passages are part of *Aggadah* (parables/stories), meant to convey moral lessons about heresy and communal strife, not to serve as a historical biography or a slur against Christianity.

**Key Takeaway:** The Talmud is a **legal debate**, not a **catechism**. If you read a transcript of two lawyers arguing over a gruesome murder case, you wouldn't assume those lawyers *support* murder.

**Here are some of the most common misquoted passages**, along with the "true response" or historical context for each. **These examples should be sufficient to expose the pattern** of making false claims to discredit Judaism.

## 1. THE “MURDERING A NON-JEW IS LIKE KILLING A WILD ANIMAL” CLAIM

- **The Quote (Fabricated):** “*Murdering a Goy (non-Jew) is like killing a wild animal.*” (Often falsely attributed to *Sanhedrin 59a*).
- **The Context:** This quote is a complete **fabrication** and does not exist anywhere in the Talmud. It is a classic example of "Blood Libel" or anti-Semitic misinformation, where violent or dehumanizing phrases are invented and assigned a random Talmudic citation to give them an air of authority to those who cannot read the original Aramaic.
- **The True Response:** In reality, the very page cited (*Sanhedrin 59a* – see also *Baba Kama 38a*) contains the exact opposite sentiment, “*A non-Jew who occupies himself with the Torah is like a High Priest.*” Furthermore, Jewish law is explicit about the sanctity of all human life:
- **The Noachide Laws:** The Talmud establishes a universal moral code for all humanity, in which the prohibition of murder is a fundamental pillar.

## 2. THE "KILLING THE BEST OF THE GENTILES" CLAIM

- **The Quote:** “*Even the best of the Gentiles should be killed.*” (Often attributed to *Jerusalem Talmud Kiddushin 4:11* or *Masseket Soferim 15:10*).
- **The Context:** This quote is often presented as a general command for all time.
- **The True Response:** This was a specific observation made **during a time of active war** specifically referencing the 'best of the Egyptians' who, despite fearing God to save their animals from a plague, still volunteered their horses to pursue the Israelites at the Red Sea. It was a commentary on the harsh reality of the battlefield, specifically that in a life-or-death struggle, one cannot stop to vet which enemy soldier is "good." It is not, and has never been, a religious law (Halakha) to harm non-Jews.
- **The Counter-Evidence:** In the very same tractate (*Avodah Zarah*), the Talmud emphasizes the principle of *Mipnei Darchei Shalom* ("For the sake of the paths of peace"), which mandates that Jews must support the poor of non-Jews, visit their sick, and treat them with the utmost dignity.

## 3. THE "DEATH PENALTY FOR TORAH STUDY" CLAIM

- **The Quote (Misinterpreted):** “*A gentile who engages in Torah study is liable to receive the death penalty.*” (Often attributed to *Sanhedrin 59a*).
- **The Context:** This is a theoretical theological discussion regarding the unique relationship between the Jewish people and the Torah. In the ancient world, certain religious practices were viewed as a specific "sign" or "wedding ring" intended for the covenantal community.
- **The True Response:** The Talmud (*Baba Kama 38a*) declares: “*Even a non-Jew who occupies himself with the Torah is like a High Priest.*”
- The phrase "guilty of death" (*Chayav Mitah*) used in these debates is **spiritual/heavenly terminology** that emphasizes “disapproval.” It is not a mandate for a human court to execute anyone. In the history of Jewish law, no non-Jew has ever been prosecuted or harmed by a Jewish court for studying Torah. Furthermore, a rabbinical court cannot impose the death penalty for any transgression unless that specific penalty is explicitly mandated in the Written Torah and meets rigorous evidentiary requirements.

#### 4. THE "LIBBRE DAVID 37" CLAIMS

- **The Quote (Fabricated):** “*To communicate anything to a Goy about our religious relations would be equal to the killing of all Jews, for if the Goyim knew what we teach about them, they would kill us openly.*” (Often attributed to *Libbre David 37*)
- **The Context:** This is a **complete fabrication** and a classic example of anti-Semitic misinformation. There is no legitimate book in the Jewish canon titled "*Libbre David*" that contains such a passage. The title is a linguistic corruption, likely invented or mangled by polemicists in the 17th and 18th centuries to promote the myth that Jewish teachings are "secret" and "dangerous."
- **The True Response:** Jewish law and theology have been a matter of public record for centuries. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment, Jewish scholars engaged in public debates with external clergy, and Jewish texts were among the first to be printed and translated globally.
- **Open Scholarship:** The Talmud is not a secret code; it is a series of legal and ethical debates. If the Sages were hiding a "hateful" agenda, they would not have established the **Seven Noahide Laws** as a universal moral framework for all of humanity.
- **Public Access:** Today, every page of the Talmud and its major commentaries is available for free online in multiple languages, proving that there is no "hidden" doctrine.
- **Historical Source:** This fabrication was popularized by **Johann Eisenmenger** in his 18<sup>th</sup> century work *Judaism Unmasked*. Eisenmenger spent years trying to find "proof" for his prejudices; when he couldn't find it in the actual text, he and his successors resorted to mistranslating fragments or inventing books and page numbers entirely.

#### 5. THE "CHILD INTERCOURSE" CLAIM

- **The Quote (Misinterpreted):** “*Sexual intercourse with a little girl is permitted if she is three years of age.*” (Often attributed to *Niddah 47a, Sanhedrin 55b, or Kethuboth 11b*).
- **The Context:** This is a severe distortion of technical legal discussions. In these passages, the Sages are not discussing "permission" or lifestyle choices; they are debating **legal definitions** and "worst-case scenarios" regarding the biological benchmarks of maturity and how they affect legal standing (such as inheritance, ritual purity, or the validity of a marriage contract) in the ancient world.
- **The True Response:** The Talmud strictly prohibits child abuse and emphasizes the protection of minors. These specific legalistic debates were intended to define at what age a physical act carries legal consequences in a courtroom, not to condone or encourage such acts. Furthermore, *Kiddushin 41a*, explicitly forbids a man from marrying off his daughter until she is old enough to give her own consent.

#### 6. THE "PERMISSION TO CHEAT" CLAIM

- **The Quote (Misinterpreted):** “*A Jew may rob a non-Jew.*” (Often attributed to *Sanhedrin 57a*).
- **The Context:** This snippet is pulled from a complex legal debate about whether certain punishments apply equally under specific ancient jurisdictions.
- **The True Response:** The very same page and subsequent discussions conclude that **stealing from a non-Jew is strictly prohibited**. Sages argue that such an act is *worse* than stealing from a Jew because it commits *Hillul Hashem* (the profanation of God's name), bringing shame upon the faith.

## 7. THE "JESUS IN BOILING EXCREMENT" CLAIM

- **The Quote (Actual but Contextual):** Mention of "Yeshu" being punished in the afterlife in excrement. (*Gittin* 56a-57a)
- **The Context:** These passages are part of the *Aggadah* (homiletic stories) describing the afterlife of historical enemies of Israel including Titus, Balaam, and Yeshu. Critics claim the passages speak about Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of Christianity.
- **The True Response:** These passages are part of *Aggadah* (parables/stories), meant to convey moral lessons about heresy and communal strife, not to serve as a historical biography or a slur against Christianity, but rather a theological reflection on divine justice against oppressors.
  - Historians and scholars note that "Yeshu" was a common name. The individual described in *Gittin* lived in a different era than the founder of Christianity. Additionally, the term 'Notzri' may not refer to the city of Nazareth, rather enemies from a foreign land, as seen in *Jeremiah* 4:16.
  - The Talmud uses **hyperbolic, symbolic language** to describe "measure-for-measure" punishment. In these cases, the punishment was meant to mirror the specific sins of the individuals (often involving sexual immorality or the corruption of "the seed"). These are moral lessons, not a literal description or Jewish hatred.

## 8. THE "NON-JEWS ARE NOT HUMAN" (ADAM) CLAIM

- **The Quote:** "You are called 'Adam' (man), but the non-Jews are not called 'Adam'." (*Baba Metzia* 114b).
- **The Context:** This is perhaps the most famous "proof text" used by critics. In Hebrew, there are several words for "man" (*ish, enosh, gever, and adam*).
- **The True Response:** This is a **technical legal distinction regarding ritual impurity** (*Tumah*). The Torah uses the specific word *Adam* when discussing how impurity spreads under a roof. The sages argued that these specific ritual laws applied only to the Jewish community. It was never a statement on the biological or spiritual humanity of others. In fact, the Talmud uses the term *Adam* to refer to all of humanity, commanding respect for all.

## 9. THE "NON-JEWS ARE ANIMALS" CLAIM

- **The Quote (Fabricated)** "The souls of non-Jews come from impure spirits and are called pigs." (Often attributed to *Baba Mezia* 114a-114b).
- **The Context:** This is a classic fabrication. In the actual text of *Baba Mezia* 114b, the discussion is about ritual purity and whether a grave of a non-Jew conveys "tent impurity."
- **The True Response:** The passage uses a legalistic distinction regarding specific temple-era purity laws. It is not a commentary on the "soul" or human value. In fact, the Talmud elsewhere states that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" (*Sanhedrin* 105a).

## 10. THE "RIGHT TO EXPLOIT" (INTEREST) CLAIM

- **The Quote:** *"It is a command to charge a non-Jew interest."* (Often linked to Maimonides or *Baba Metzia* 70b).
- **The Context:** This refers to the biblical law that Jews cannot charge interest to their "brothers" (other Jews).
- **The True Response:** In the ancient world, charging interest was considered a commercial transaction, not a moral evil. The Torah discourages charging interest to "strangers" (foreigners/merchants). The Talmud clarifies that this was a **reciprocal economic rule**: because non-Jews charged Jews interest, Jews were allowed to do the same to sustain their economy. It was never a "command to exploit," but a regulation of fair trade in a world where interest was the standard.

## 11. THE "FORBIDDEN TO SAVE FROM A PIT" CLAIM

- **The Distortion:** Claims that the Talmud says you should not rescue a non-Jew who has fallen into a pit (*Avodah Zarah* 26b).
- **The Reality:** This passage refers specifically to *Mesumadim* (traitors/informants) and *Minim* (dangerous heretics) who were actively working with the Roman authorities to have Jews executed. It was a wartime instruction regarding **political enemies and traitors**, not a general rule for non-Jewish civilians. For all other people, the law of *Mipnei Darchei Shalom* (the ways of peace) mandates saving their lives.

## 12. THE "GENTILES IN THE WORLD TO COME" CLAIM

- **The Quote:** Critics often claim the Talmud says *only* Jews go to heaven.
- **The Context:** This misunderstanding comes from a narrow reading of the phrase "All Israel has a portion in the world to come" (*Sanhedrin* 90a).
- **The True Response:** The Talmud takes a remarkably universalist view compared to many other ancient religions. It explicitly states: **"The righteous of all nations have a portion in the world to come"** (*Tosefta Sanhedrin* 13:2). To be "righteous," a person must follow the **Seven Noahide Laws** (basic moral codes like don't murder, don't steal).

## Addendum 1: The "Khazar Fiction"

This argument claims that Ashkenazi Jews are not biological descendants of the ancient Israelites but are instead descended from a Turkic people called the Khazars), we look at four main areas: **Genetics**, **History**, **Linguistics**, and **Demographics**.

This argument is often used to delegitimize the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel, but modern science and scholarship have largely debunked it.

### 1. The Genetic Evidence (The "DNA Test")

Modern DNA technology has provided the most definitive refutation. Studies of the Jewish "Genetic Map" consistently show:

- **Levantine Origins:** Genetic analysis of Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Mizrahi Jews shows that they share a common ancestral "source" in the Middle East (modern-day Israel/Levant).
- **The Cohanim Connection:** DNA studies of *Cohanim* (the priestly class) across various Jewish communities worldwide—who are separated by thousands of miles—show a shared Y-chromosomal signature (the Cohen Modal Haplotype). This confirms a common male ancestor from the Levant, predating the Khazar conversion by over a millennium.
- **Minimal Khazar Markers:** While there was some minor genetic mixing as Jews migrated through Europe and Asia (as with any population), there is no evidence of a "mass conversion" that replaced the Israelite DNA with Turkic/Khazar DNA.



### 2. The Historical Reality

While there is some historical evidence that some of the Khazar royalty and nobility may have converted to Judaism in the 8th or 9th century, the scale was vastly exaggerated by later theorists.

- **The "Vanished" Empire:** When the Khazar Empire fell in the 10th century, there is no historical record of a mass migration of Khazars into Poland or Russia.
- **Existing Jewish Communities:** Historical records show that Jewish communities already existed in the Rhineland (Germany) and Eastern Europe well before the fall of the Khazar Empire. These communities migrated from the West (Germany/France) toward the East (Poland), not from the East (Khazaria) toward the West.

### 3. The Linguistic Evidence

If Ashkenazi Jews were descendants of Turkic Khazars, their language (Yiddish) would reflect this.

- **Yiddish Roots:** Yiddish is a Germanic language. About 70-80% of its vocabulary is German, and about 20% is Hebrew/Aramaic.
- **Missing Turkic Influence:** There are virtually zero Turkic words in the Yiddish language. If a mass population of Turkic speakers had converted and become the "Ashkenazim," their language would be saturated with Turkic linguistic structures and vocabulary.

## 4. Intellectual Dishonesty of the Theory

The Khazar theory was popularized in the 1970s by Arthur Koestler (a Jewish author) in his book *The Thirteenth Tribe*. Koestler's intent was to end anti-Semitism by arguing that Jews weren't "semitic," but the theory was quickly adopted by those seeking to erase Jewish history.

- **Archeological Silence:** Archeological digs in the former Khazar territories have found very few Jewish artifacts (menorahs, Hebrew inscriptions, etc.), suggesting that even in Khazaria, Judaism was likely practiced only by a small ruling elite rather than the entire population.
- **The "Graveyard Test":** Archaeologists have excavated numerous Khazar-era burial sites. The vast majority of these sites show pagan burial customs (horses buried with warriors, grave goods) rather than Jewish burial rites (simple graves, no cremation, specific orientation).

## 5. The "Living Refutation": Mizrahi and Sephardic Majorities

The Khazar theory focuses almost exclusively on **Ashkenazi Jews** (those of European descent), conveniently ignoring the millions of Jews who never left the Middle East.

- **The Demographic Reality:** Roughly **half of the Jewish population in Israel** consists of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews. These are families who lived continuously in Middle Eastern and North African countries—such as Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, and Syria—from the time of the Babylonian exile until the mid-20th century.
- **A Continuous Presence:** These Jews had absolutely no contact with the Khazar Kingdom in the Caucasus. Their customs, liturgy, and physical presence in the region prove a continuous, unbroken link to the Levant that predates the Khazar conversion by over a thousand years.
- **Genetic Unity:** As mentioned previously, DNA testing shows that these "Middle Eastern" Jews are genetically more similar to their Ashkenazi "European" brothers than they are to the local Arab populations they lived amongst for centuries. This confirms that the entire Jewish people—regardless of where they wandered—share a single biological origin in the Land of Israel.



## Summary

1. **Science:** DNA proves Middle Eastern, not Turkic, ancestry.
2. **Language:** Yiddish is Germanic/Hebrew, not Turkic.
3. **History:** The Jewish migration pattern moved from the Levant to Rome, then to Germany, and then to Poland—the opposite direction of the Khazar Empire.
4. **Demographics:** The existence of the Mizrahi majority in Israel proves an unbroken Middle Eastern lineage.

## ADDENDUM 2: How Could Judaism Permit Slavery?

Maimonides (the Rambam) understood Jewish slavery not as an ideal social system, but as a **deliberate moral concession meant to guide society toward abolition over time**. In his broader philosophy, the Torah does not always demand instantaneous moral perfection; instead, it works with human nature and historical reality, gradually reshaping behavior and values.

According to Maimonides, slavery existed as a universal ancient reality, and the world had not yet developed the social or economic structures necessary to function without it. He suggests that the Torah did not abolish slavery immediately because human nature and societal systems are incapable of sudden, drastic shifts from one extreme to another.

The Torah therefore regulated the institution heavily, stripping it of cruelty and absolute power. Masters were commanded to act with mercy, provide equal food and living conditions, avoid humiliation, and recognize the servant's human dignity. These demands transformed slavery from domination into moral responsibility.



For Maimonides, these laws were **educational**: they trained Jews to internalize compassion, restraint, and the recognition of the Image of God in every person. As ethical sensitivity increased, slavery became incompatible with the standard of piety (*middat chasidut*) expected of a Jew.

In this way, **Jewish slavery functioned as a transitional stage**, ethically and gradually narrowing the institution until it could no longer survive, pointing toward a future where slavery would be morally unthinkable and therefore abolished.

### In Summary:

- Torah addressed slavery as it existed, not as it ideally should have been.
- Rather than banning slavery outright, Jewish law (gradual approach) weakened it step by step.
- Judaism regulated slavery with strict laws that limited a master's power and affirmed the servant's human dignity.
- Servants were protected from abuse, guaranteed rest, and required to be treated with kindness and equality in daily life.
- The Eved Ivri (Jewish servant) functioned as an indentured servant, selling his labor to pay off a debt or recover from poverty. They were required to be released after six years of service or during the Jubilee year.
- A non-Jewish servant was granted freedom if they suffered a permanent physical injury, even as minor as the loss of a tooth or an eye, caused by their master.
- Non-Jewish servants entered a semi-Jewish status, sharing religious obligations and a clear path to freedom and full inclusion. (see *Berakhot* 47b)
- Judaism argues that, in the ancient world, this form of servitude functioned as a structured and protective system meant to guide individuals toward responsibility and moral development, not as a lifelong or ideal social institution.

Overall, Judaism framed slavery as a temporary reality, ethically constrained and aimed toward eventual obsolescence and universal dignity.

## Addendum 3: An Eye for An Eye

The graphic statement “**an eye for an eye**,” found in Exodus 21:24 in the Torah portion *Mishpatim*, may at first seem to endorse revenge, something the Torah rejects in Leviticus 19:18.

Unlike those who read the Bible out of context, Judaism requires that we examine the original language and context to determine the Torah's correct meaning. In this case, Judaism has always understood 'an eye for an eye,' or *Ayin Tachat Ayin* in Hebrew, as teaching the principle of monetary compensation for injuries.

Evidence for this is found just verses earlier in Exodus 21:19, which mandates that the person who caused an injury must pay for the victim's “loss of time and healing.”

Since monetary compensation is only one part of making amends, our Sages explain that the Torah uses the graphic “eye for an eye” imagery so offenders would contemplate the profound damage they inflicted and be motivated to repent and seek forgiveness.

There is also an insight from a Jewish sage who noted that the original Hebrew, phrase *Ayin Tachat Ayin*, “an eye for an eye”, contains an allusion to monetary compensation.

The word *Tachat* literally means 'underneath.' If you replace the three Hebrew letters of the word *Ayin* (א-י-ע) meaning “eye.” with the letters that immediately follow or are underneath them, in the Hebrew alphabet, they are the letters for the Hebrew word *Keseph* (כ-ס-ף), meaning 'money.'

This fascinating insight demonstrates the divine nature of the Torah by providing a profound hint that the 'inner' meaning of the law was always intended to be financial restitution.



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